



August 21, 2002

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Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW, CY-B402
Washington, DC 20554

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Re: WC Docket No. 02-214
Application by the Verizon Corporation for Authorization Under Section 271 of the Communications Act to Provide In-Region, Interlata Services in the State of Virginia

Dear Ms. Dortch:

The National Black Chamber of Commerce (NBCC) strongly encourages the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to grant approval of Verizon's application to provide long-distance service to consumers in Virginia. NBCC is the largest Black business association in the world. We have 207 chapters located in 40 states and 8 nations and we have direct access to over 85,000 Black owned businesses located in the United States. One of the NBCC's primary goals is the removal of barriers to commerce. The lack of access to competitive, long-distance service is such a barrier that continues to disproportionately impact under served rural and urban communities where many small, woman and minority-owned businesses are located.

The NBCC believes that, just as consumers benefited from Verizon's entry in the long-distance market in New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, so will consumers in Virginia. Verizon has established a track record for innovative calling plans that provide savings to both the low and high volume user. In each state that Verizon has been given long-distance approval competitors were motivated to provide alternative local, long-distance and data services to consumers. Choice among competitive plans will especially benefit African Americans, who tend to use long distance service at a much higher rate than the average American.

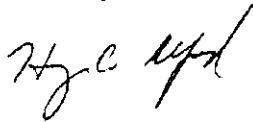
The Internet and America's leading position in exploiting Internet-based technologies have driven the extraordinary performance of the U.S. economy over the last five years. Rapid deployment of current and next generation technology to access the Internet is a high priority. Yet African American use of the Internet is only 4 % of America's total usage. Verizon's entry will enable the deployment of competitive broadband and advanced services. This will enable small businesses – many of which are NBCC members – to engage in E-commerce globally. The NBCC's view is that today a business either has an Internet presence or it is doomed for

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extinction. Verizon's entry into the long-distance market will likely lead to greater availability and lower prices for broadband and advanced services thereby affording our constituents with the opportunity to help this country to sustain its incipient economic recovery.

The NBCC respectfully requests the FCC to quickly approve Verizon's application. We are confident that the FCC's approval will remove the barrier to access to competitive, long-distance service for consumers in the state of Virginia.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H.C. Alford", written in a cursive style.

Harry C. Alford
President & CEO
National Black Chamber of Commerce